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House Committee on the District of Columbia

Report on H.R. 22922

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and for other purposes.



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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

REPORT OF
THE COMMISSIONERS OF THE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

ON

H. R. 22922

TO PROVIDE FOR A DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION FOR THE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA AND FOR A DIRECTOR OF
CHARITIES FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

61ST CONGRESS, 2D SESSION

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COMMISSIONERS' REPORT ON H. R. 22922.

OFFICE COMMISSIONERS OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA,
Washington, March 30, 1910.

Hon. S. W. SMITH,
*Chairman Committee on the District of Columbia,
House of Representatives.*

SIR: The Commissioners of the District of Columbia have the honor to submit the following on H. R. 22922, Sixty-first Congress, second session, "To provide for a director of education for the District of Columbia and for a director of charities for the District of Columbia, and for other purposes," which you referred to them for examination and report:

The object of the bill is to abolish the Board of Education of the District of Columbia, created by act of Congress approved June 20, 1906, and to confer the powers and duties of said board upon a director of education to be appointed by the Commissioners of the District of Columbia; and also to abolish the Board of Charities of the District of Columbia, created by act of Congress approved June 6, 1900, and to transfer the powers and duties of that board to a director of charities to be appointed by the Commissioners of the District of Columbia. The compensation of the director of education is fixed at \$7,000 per annum and that of the director of charities at \$5,000 per annum. The proposed change is to take effect July 1, 1910, and thereafter the control over all matters of education and charities is to be vested in the Commissioners of the District of Columbia and placed under the direct supervision of the director of education and the director of charities, respectively.

The subject-matter of this bill is of extreme importance and requires the most careful consideration.

For the purpose of this report the commissioners will discuss, first, the matter of education, and, secondly, the matter of charities.

EDUCATION.

The present Board of Education of the District of Columbia was appointed under authority of section 2 of the act of Congress approved June 20, 1906, "An act to fix and regulate the salaries of teachers, school officers, and other employees of the Board of Education of the District of Columbia."

That act provided that the control of the public schools of the District of Columbia should be vested in a board of education to consist of nine members, all of whom should be bona fide residents of the District of Columbia for five years immediately preceding their appointment, and three of whom should be women. The act provided

that the members of the Board of Education should be appointed by the judges of the supreme court of the District of Columbia for terms of three years and that they should serve without compensation. A secretary to the board was provided for and the board was also authorized to appoint a superintendent of schools and two assistant superintendents of schools, together with other officers, teachers, janitors, and other employees.

By the terms of the act it was made the duty of the Board of Education to determine all questions of general policy relating to the schools, to appoint the executive officers under the board, and to define their duties and to "direct expenditures" for school purposes.

It was provided, however, that—

All expenditures of public funds for such school purposes shall be made and accounted for as now provided by law under the direction and control of the Commissioners of the District of Columbia.

Thus the law places the direction of expenditures for school purposes at once upon the Board of Education and upon the commissioners.

The act provided that the Board of Education should submit annually to the commissioners estimates in detail of the amount of money required for public schools for the ensuing year.

The act also provided for the appointment, promotion, transfer, and dismissal by the board of its subordinate officers and teachers, a provision being made that those employees coming under the classification of directors, principals, heads of departments, teachers, and other subordinates of the superintendent of schools should not be appointed, promoted, transferred, or dismissed except upon the written recommendation of the superintendent of schools. The board was given power to remove the superintendent of schools at any time for adequate cause affecting his character and efficiency as superintendent.

Prior to the act of June 20, 1906, above referred to, the Board of Education was appointed by the Commissioners of the District of Columbia under the authority of an act approved June 6, 1900, being the District appropriation bill for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1901. By that act the commissioners were authorized to appoint seven persons whose term of office should be seven years and whose compensation should be \$10 for each meeting, not to exceed for any member the sum of \$500 per annum. This board had practically the same jurisdiction over the public schools as is now exercised by the present Board of Education and had the specific duty of reporting to the commissioners annually "the sanitary and structural conditions of all buildings in use as well as those in course of construction, with recommendations as respects needed changes."

This board, appointed by the commissioners, was the successor of the board of school trustees which was provided for in the organic act of the District of Columbia, approved June 11, 1878, which abolished the old board of school trustees appointed under the previous form of government of the District of Columbia and directed the appointment of 19 persons as trustees of public schools. This act of June 11, 1878, was amended by an act of Congress approved July 1, 1882, which reduced the number of the board of school trustees to 9 members.

PRESENT BOARD OF EDUCATION.

The present Board of Education consists, as heretofore stated, of 9 members, appointed by the judges of the supreme court of the District of Columbia. It has control of all questions of general policy relating to schools, including matters of education. The expenditure of all public funds for school purposes is placed by law under the direction and control of the Commissioners of the District of Columbia, although the law is inconsistent or conflicting as above described, and the commissioners prepare the estimates of appropriations which are annually submitted to Congress.

It needs no argument to demonstrate the disadvantages of the existing divided jurisdiction and responsibility and the economy and efficiency that would result from placing the whole school administration under one head.

The line of demarcation between the duties of the commissioners and those of the Board of Education is not sharply drawn, and this causes frequent conflict of jurisdiction and a consequent occupation of time to adjust differences of opinion regarding school matters without any resulting benefit to the District. In consequence, many things which are done are accomplished by compromise, in which often the best results are sacrificed.

The commissioners appreciate the voluntary public service that is being given by the present members of the Board of Education; but they believe that a more businesslike procedure would be to have the duties of this board performed by a high-class official, a director of education, possessed of broad executive experience and ability.

The commissioners believe that many economies could be effected under a different system of administration of educational matters. As an illustration, the commissioners would state that the Board of Education submitted to the commissioners estimates for the fiscal year 1911 amounting to \$4,722,140.50. In preparing their estimates the commissioners were required by law to keep the total within an amount double the estimated revenues for the year. The estimates of the Board of Education seemed to the commissioners exceedingly large and out of proportion, considering the total means available and considering also the sums expended elsewhere for educational purposes. The commissioners thereupon called on the Board of Education to reduce its estimates, but was met with a refusal of the board so to reduce them, thus placing the duty on the commissioners to make the reductions, although unacquainted with the items that could be most advantageously reduced.

The commissioners believe that the cost of the school system at the present time is unduly large, as would seem to be apparent if comparison be made between expenditures for schools in the District of Columbia and elsewhere.

A statement has recently been given out by a member of the Board of Education which might convey an entirely erroneous impression as to relative expenditures here and elsewhere. The following is extracted from recent publications in the local press:

"The cost of education in the District of Columbia is lower than the average cost in 158 other American cities," declared W. V. Cox, vice-president of the Board of Education, at yesterday's meeting of that body. Mr. Cox spoke in reply to charges made in the House last Tuesday by Representative Peters, of Massachusetts, who

accused the board of unbusinesslike methods, and offered a bill abolishing the board and creating in its stead a director of education.

"The cost of education in the District of Columbia," said Mr. Cox, "when compared with the cost of other things in the municipal budget is not high—in fact, it is a little lower than the average relative cost of education in 158 cities in the United States.

* * * * *

COST BELOW THE AVERAGE.

Mr. Cox quoted advance sheets of Census Bureau bulletins showing that the total expense of maintaining the ordinary city departments and offices in 158 cities for the year 1907 was as follows:

| | |
|--|-----------------|
| 1. General government..... | \$43,717,379 |
| 2. Protection of life and property..... | 93,293,838 |
| 3. Health, conservation, and sanitation..... | 37,338,312 |
| 4. Highways..... | 44,858,464 |
| 5. Charities and corrections..... | 24,710,414 |
| 6. Education..... | 109,919,975 |
| 7. Recreation..... | 12,098,333 |
| 8. Miscellaneous..... | 5,402,709 |
| Total..... | 371,944,424 |

"The total amount expended for education," said Mr. Cox, in analyzing the figures "was \$109,919,975; this was 29.5 per cent of all city expenditures. Now, compare this with the proportion of money allowed for education in the District of Columbia appropriation bill as it came from conference March 1, 1910. The total amount appropriated for all purposes in the District of Columbia (see conference report, p. 19) is \$10,625,423.29. The total amount appropriated for schools is \$2,998,960.60. The per cent of all expenses allowed for education in the District of Columbia is 28.2. The average per cent of all expenses allowed for education in 158 cities is 29.5."

Granting the accuracy of the figures quoted above, it is necessary to inquire as to whether they have been fairly employed, for anything can be proven with figures if they be handled judiciously.

In the District of Columbia the taxes are in lieu of taxes paid elsewhere for state, county, and municipal purposes, including special assessments for street improvements, and the taxes in the District of Columbia are fairly comparable with the sum of such taxes in other communities.

It would appear fair, therefore, if percentages be used, to ascertain what proportion expenditures for schools bear to all taxes collected within the various municipalities investigated, including the District of Columbia.

Without having all the data at hand to indicate the cities used in making up the figures employed in the quotation above, yet a fair assumption may be made that the city taxes raised in those municipalities should be increased by some 46 per cent to allow for state and county taxes and taxes for street improvements. Applying this reasonable assumption, it appears that, of all the taxes raised in those municipalities, but 20.2 per cent was used for educational purposes.

In the District of Columbia it may or it may not be fair to subtract from the total revenues the contribution of the United States before ascertaining the percentage. If that contribution be subtracted, the percentage becomes about 56.4; if it be not subtracted, the percentage remains about 28.2. But it is true beyond cavil that in the District of Columbia considerably over 50 per cent of all taxes locally raised are being expended for schools, while in other communities only about 20 per cent are being so expended.

It occurs to the commissioners, however, that the fairest basis of comparison is by relative costs per pupil per annum. In Washington that cost was \$54.75 in 1910, an increase of \$2.98 in one year.

According to the most recently published figures of the Census Bureau, the cost of education per pupil per annum in other cities of size comparable with Washington averages \$29.65.

The facts are as shown in the following table, wherein the number of pupils where not definitely ascertained is obtained by dividing the population by 6.56, as is known to be fair.

| Year. | City. | Population. | Number of pupils. | Total cost of schools. | Cost per pupil. |
|-----------|------------------------|-------------|-------------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| 1910..... | Washington..... | 343,003 | 55,500 | \$3,038,660.00 | \$54.75 |
| 1907..... | Baltimore..... | 553,669 | 80,235 | 2,212,564.00 | 27.58 |
| 1907..... | Cleveland..... | 460,327 | 69,512 | 2,545,873.00 | 36.62 |
| 1907..... | Buffalo..... | 381,819 | 58,204 | 1,643,459.00 | 28.23 |
| 1907..... | Pittsburg..... | 375,082 | 57,176 | 2,126,831.00 | 37.19 |
| 1907..... | San Francisco..... | 360,290 | 54,922 | 1,255,360.00 | 22.86 |
| 1907..... | Detroit..... | 353,535 | 53,892 | 1,662,973.00 | 30.86 |
| 1907..... | Cincinnati..... | 345,230 | 52,626 | 1,696,715.00 | 32.24 |
| 1907..... | Milwaukee..... | 317,903 | 48,460 | 1,382,144.00 | 28.52 |
| 1907..... | New Orleans..... | 314,146 | 47,886 | 768,965.00 | 16.06 |
| 1907..... | Newark, N. J..... | 289,634 | 44,151 | 2,138,746.00 | 48.44 |
| 1907..... | Minneapolis..... | 273,825 | 41,741 | 1,260,593.00 | 30.20 |
| 1907..... | Jersey City, N. J..... | 237,952 | 36,273 | 983,751.00 | 27.12 |
| 1907..... | Louisville, Ky..... | 226,129 | 34,470 | 687,083.00 | 19.93 |

CHARITIES.

As previously stated, it is proposed by the bill to abolish the Board of Charities, created by act of Congress approved June 6, 1900, and to transfer the powers and duties of that board to a director of charities to be appointed by the commissioners.

By the act of Congress of June 6, 1900, a Board of Charities was authorized, to consist of five members, residents of the District of Columbia, to be appointed by the President of the United States, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, for a term of three years. The members of said board serve without compensation. The board was authorized to appoint a secretary at a salary of \$3,000 per annum and other subordinate officers and employees.

Previous to the organization of this board, the matter of charities had been under the control of a superintendent of charities appointed by the President of the United States by and with the advice and consent of the Senate under authority of an act of Congress approved August 6, 1890, and this superintendent received a compensation of \$3,000 per annum.

The purposes of the law providing for the superintendent were to secure "a more equitable and efficient expenditure of the several sums appropriated for charities."

Previous to that time there had been no methodical supervision of charities and the appropriations made to the various charitable institutions were expended by them without such supervision.

The duty of this superintendent, as laid down in the law, included the formulation of a plan or system for expenditures for charities in the District in such manner, by consolidation, combination, or other direction, as best to secure the ends contemplated by the several institutions and associations for which appropriations were made,

with the least interference, each with the other, or misapplication of effort or expenditure, and without duplication of charitable work or expenditure. It was provided that all such appropriations should be expended under the general direction of the superintendent in conformity with such a system or plan subject to the approval of the Board of Commissioners of the District of Columbia. It was also made the duty of the superintendent to make an examination into the charitable institutions and to recommend such changes and modifications as would promote economy, efficiency, and best secure highest results in the administration of charities. This superintendent was required to report in detail to the commissioners and the commissioners were required to submit such report with their estimates for appropriations.

Previous to this legislation the several charitable institutions which received appropriations were required to report to the commissioners, in detail, an account of the receipts and expenditures and all their operations, which report the commissioners were required to transmit to Congress with such suggestions and recommendations as they might deem pertinent.

The act of June 6, 1900, authorizing the present Board of Charities, abolished the office of superintendent of charities and placed upon the Board of Charities the visitation, inspection, and general supervision over the charitable institutions, societies, and associations, including those of a correctional or reformatory character, which were supported in whole or in part by appropriations by Congress. The board was authorized to establish rules, and no payment was to be made to any such institution which did not conform to such rules. The board was required to meet at least once a month, and the officers of each charitable institution subject to its supervision were required to furnish to the board such statistics and information as it might desire. The board was authorized to prescribe forms of reports, to pass upon plans for all new institutions, to make an annual report to Congress through the commissioners, and to include in its annual report estimates of appropriations.

In the act the Commissioners of the District of Columbia were authorized to order an investigation by the board of the management of any institution, and the act required that all accounts and expenditures of the board should be certified in such manner as required by the commissioners and paid as other accounts against the District of Columbia.

The same argument hereinbefore made as to economy of administration in the handling of educational matters that would result from the substitution of a director of education for a Board of Education would with equal force apply to the administration of charities. The commissioners believe that these important functions of the District government should be treated and handled as business propositions, which involves a centralization of responsibility and authority.

The commissioners appreciate the voluntary public service rendered by members of the Board of Charities, and they think it has been of great benefit to the District of Columbia. At the same time they believe that the administrative duties and executive control of charities and correctional matters could with advantage to the public service be transferred to a single executive who would report directly

to the commissioners. The Board of Commissioners is the executive authority of the District of Columbia, and the commissioners believe that the control of the expenditure of all appropriations made by Congress for any purpose of the District of Columbia should be vested in them. In no other way can there be a proper coordination among the various functions of municipal government.

CONCLUSION.

The purposes of the bill under consideration are, therefore, believed by the commissioners to be wise and in the interest of efficient and economical administration. They further believe that the bill is worded so as to accomplish the end desired.

The bill has been carefully drafted so as not to interfere with the present organization of the school system or of charities, except to provide for each a proper executive head. The board of education is now appointed by the judges of the supreme court of the District of Columbia, and this extrajudicial and wholly executive function the commissioners believe should not be placed upon such a body. The board of charities is appointed by the President of the United States, but the commissioners believe that the control over local charities is a municipal function and should be exercised by the duly authorized municipal authorities of the District of Columbia.

Neither the judges of the supreme court nor the President can be in such intimate touch with our municipal administration as to permit them to know to what extent their appointees are working in harmony with the commissioners in the matters under consideration, where the respective jurisdictions are so intermingled. The position in which the commissioners find themselves, with insufficient authority to coordinate the various municipal expenditures, although responsible for the estimates upon which District appropriations are made, seems to be difficult and illogical.

For the reasons given above, the commissioners urge the passage of this bill.

If there be some who believe in the special efficacy of boards to perform certain functions in connection with education and charities, it is suggested that the commissioners might be given authority to appoint advisory (not administrative) boards, whom they could charge with duties of visitation, inspection, and report.

The commissioners inclose herewith a draft of a section to be added to the bill to provide for advisory boards, if Congress shall deem such boards necessary.

Very respectfully,

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA,
By CUNO H. RUDOLPH, President.

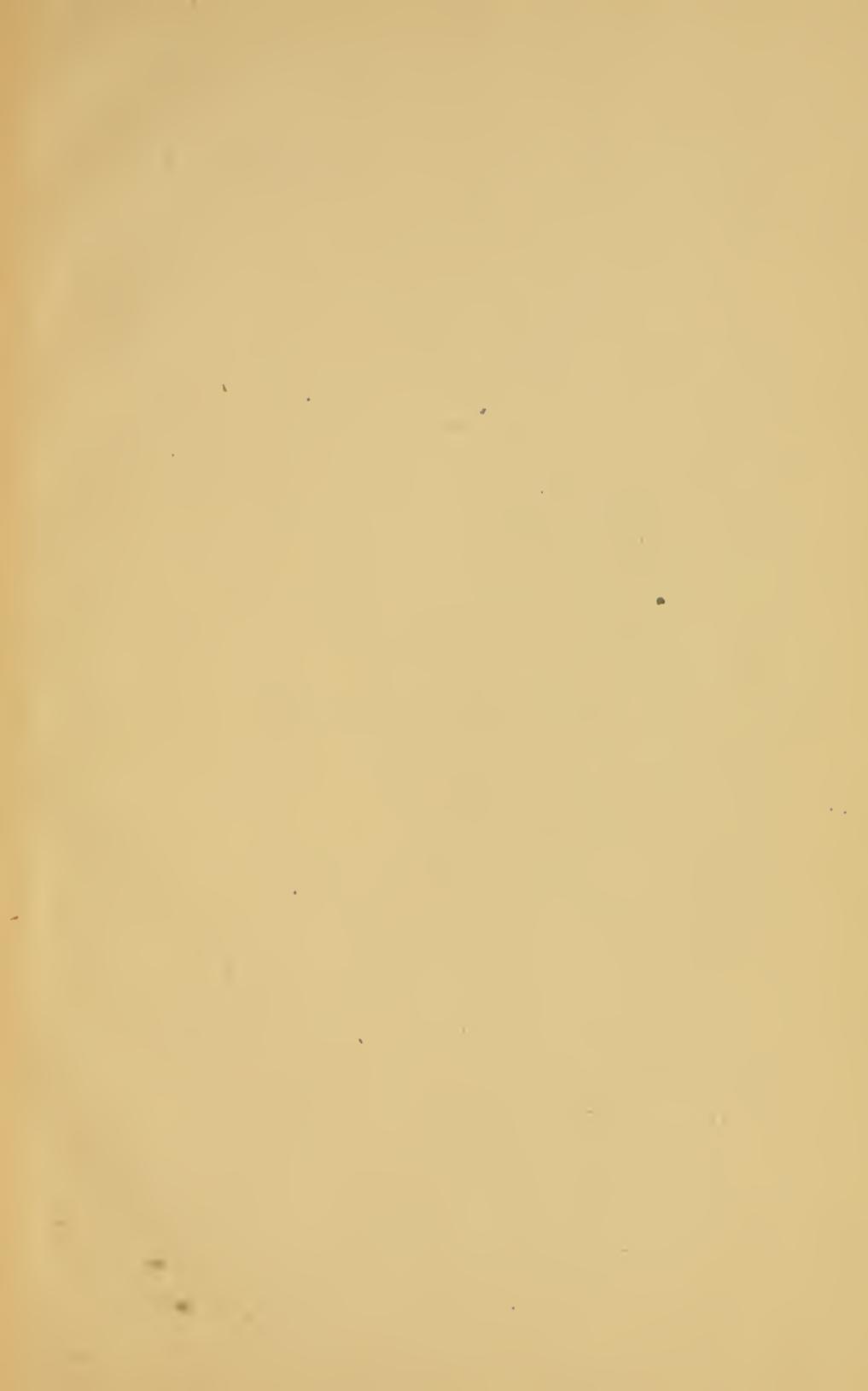
SECTION —. The Commissioners of the District of Columbia are hereby authorized to appoint a Board of Education and a Board of Charities and Corrections, to consist of five persons each, to serve without compensation and for such terms as said commissioners shall designate.

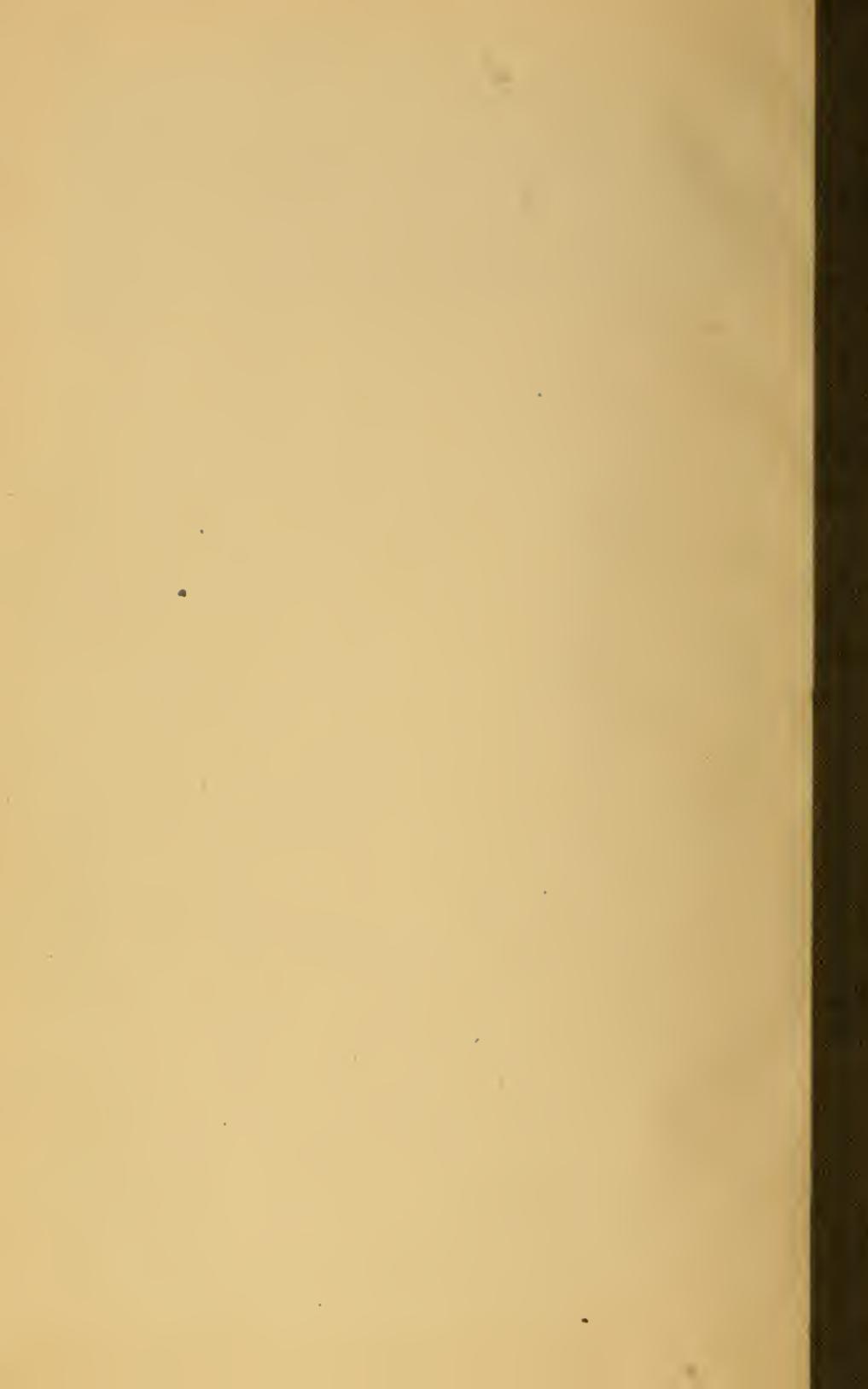
The duties of the Board of Education shall be to advise the commissioners on all questions of general policy relating to the public schools of the District of Columbia, to inspect public schools and school buildings, to consider courses of study, to sug-

gest to the said commissioners desirable changes and improvements, and also to perform such other duties of an advisory nature as may be assigned to them by said commissioners.

The duties of the Board of Charities and Corrections shall be to visit and inspect all institutions, societies, or associations of a charitable, eleemosynary, correctional, or reformatory character which are supported, in whole or in part, by appropriations of Congress made for the care or treatment of residents of the District of Columbia and to advise the said commissioners as to any improvements in methods in the care of patients, or in the expenditure of funds, or in methods of accounting for same as they may deem necessary in order more fully to carry out the objects of said appropriations, and also to give such additional advisory assistance to said commissioners as may be called for under such rules and regulations as the said commissioners may prescribe.







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